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External Drivers for Embedding Sustainability Practices Within the Qatar Oil and Gas Industry: An Institutional Theory Perspective

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Abstract: With the increasing importance given to sustainability, organisations now-a-days are implementing sustainability practice within their strategies to ensure a positive impact on their stakeholders, society and environment. Qatar seems to be following the rest of the world and has decided to introduce a sustainability plan to ensure prosperity through its national vision and strategy plans that targets all of its sectors and especially the oil and gas. Furthermore, there is a very limited research on external drivers for implementing sustainability practices within organisations in the Qatar oil and gas, which is the core purpose of this paper. Using institutional theory, the paper had shed the light on external pressures exerted by different institutions on organisations in order to implement sustainability practices. Through a systematic approach, qualitative data collection and analysis was carried using semi-structured interviews and content analysis of professional from the Qatar oil and gas industry to enquire about the external drivers that pushed their organisations to implement sustainability initiatives. The findings show that organisations are driven to implement sustainability by seven drivers, that could be grouped into three main categories, coercive, normative and mimetic pressures. It is argued that organisations' attempt to conform and reduce the uncertainty regarding sustainability would depend heavily on the type of force exerted on them. Therefore, decision makers and executives must have a better understanding of sustainability pressures exerted on their organisation in order to ensure an improved sustainability performance.

Keywords: Institutional Theory, Sustainable Development, Sustainability Initiatives drivers, Qatar oil and gas sector

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1. Introduction

It was not until the globalization era that the attention was brought to the potential detrimental impact of human's development on the planet (Grove, 2002). The continuous anthropogenic activities surly cannot go unnoticed and with the gap between industrial and less developed countries in economic, environmental and social aspects, the World Commission on Environment and Development introduced the term 'sustainable development' (WCED, 1987) in an attempt to reduce this gap. The concept was really praised amongst scholars and practitioners, but it was seen as a reactive response to the unhealthy regime of human activities. Organisations started using the term to identify their environmental, social and economic activities and performances and was labelled "Triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1998).

Qatar had experienced an unparalleled development and economic growth, this is seen in the increase in the standards of living of the Qatari population (Richer, 2014; Aboushaqrah *et al*, 2019). This is due mainly to the important revenues from oil and gas exports. The rapid development, especially between 2005 and 2008, was considered unsustainable by several scholars and specialists (Sillitoe, 2014), and was the product of three main factors, the population's rapid growth, the high energy consumption and production patterns and the significant technological change the country is experiencing (Slahiddin and Gow, 2019).

Sustainability oriented organisations within the Qatar oil and gas sector had introduced a new business model, that insures environmental and social prosperity along with economic benefits. However, not a lot of organisations have implemented sustainability practices and initiatives within their business strategies due to several reasons, one being the difficulties in quantifying and properly understanding the value of sustainable development. Therefore, it is essential for organisations to first identify and understand the key drivers for costs and revenues when implementing sustainability strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to identify the external drivers that fuelled the need to implementing sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry from a theoretical lens. This is critical step for the industry to get a better understanding of the potential forces that might influence their sustainability initiatives, to ensure an effective implementation. First, the paper would start by discussing the theoretical lenses the research was seen through. This is followed by the research methodology, analysis and discussion and would finish by a conclusion.

2. Sustainable Development

During UN General Assembly in 1987, the WCED published its report `Our Common Future`, which was later known as the Brundtland Report. Brundtland defined sustainable development as "the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). The report also introduced a new concept, the integration of environmental management within development strategies; breaking thus, the prevailing believes that environmental protection could only be done at the expense of economic development. However, the report received mixed reviews from the public, it was praised by several scholars for its innovative introduction of modern ways that would help solve environmental challenges with ensuring no decline in production (Daly, 1991; Goodland, 1995; Dresner, 2007, Aras and Crowther, 2009), and was criticized for lacking clear theoretical base and vagueness, leaving thus a room for personal interpretation, that could be used to collect funds wrongly (Simon, 1989; Lèlè, 1991). Hart (1995) thinks that Brundtland's definition is valid only at the macroeconomic level, while organisations can find the model to be difficult to implement

especially since it does not give sufficient insights on how to identify the present and future needs and establish the necessary resources to meet these needs. Table 1 identified 24 definitions of sustainable development.

Table 1: Sustainable development definitions

Author	Definition
Redclift (1987)	The ability of a system to keep productivity when facing serious challenges
Liverman *et al* (1988)	The survival of the human being using basic life support systems and infrastructure/institutions to protect the system's components
Pearce *et al* (1989)	The division of social and economic systems to ensure the goals from both systems are fulfilled
Lynam and Herdt (1989)	The capability of a system to keep its output levels approximately equal or greater than its historical average
Pearce and Turner (1990)	Development that guarantees the maximum of economic net benefit along with the maintenance of services/quality of natural resources over the course of time
Daly (1991)	Development without material growth that would exceed the environmental capacity of a system that makes it socially sustainable
Costanza (1991)	Consumption that could maintain the non-degradation of natural capital over time
IISD (1992)	The adoption of a business strategy/activity that meet the today needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders without overlooking the protection of the human and natural capital that would be needed in the future
Pearce and Warford (1993)	Development that insures an increase in the current generation's welfare and taking into considerations the welfare of the upcoming generations
Pezzy (1994)	Development that would not result in a decrease in the levels of well-being in the future
Mitcham (1995)	Balancing the limits to growth and need for development
Agyeman *et al* (2002)	Where the social needs and economic growth are interrelated to environmental limits
Dyllick and Hockerts (2002)	Meeting the needs of a firm's current stakeholders without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future ones
IISC (2003)	Any type of development that improves the economic efficiency of a system, while protecting and restoring its ecology and well-being of its people
Sikdar (2003)	Balance between economic development, environmental stewardship and social equity
Dupont (2004)	Creating value for shareholders and society with reduction of environmental footprint
Savitz and Weber (2006)	Is a fundamental smart management principle
Goncz *et al* (2007)	Equal weighting for economic stability, ecological compatibility and social equilibrium
Aras and Crowther (2009)	A development that brings together the economic growth and environmental protection; while considering other issues that are usually associated with development
Rogers *et al* (2012)	Explores the relationship between economic development, environmental quality and social equity
Elliot (2013)	Embraces a comprehensive critique of the governance of environment and development, including substantial rethinking of decision-making processes.
Belwitt (2015)	Series of political acts that relates to the care and stewardship of the earth in the face of the continuing exploitation by human beings with the goal of making their lives better
Baker (2016)	Is a paradigm based on principles of justice, equity and on limits to growth.
Raut *et al* (2017)	Refers to sustainability of human existence by carefully balancing social, economic and environmental capital in a continuously changing world.

The term "sustainable development" had received several different definitions throughout the years. With the majority of the early publications' main focus was the relationship between the environment and business and accounting's role in that, with an importance given to

different ways data could be processed. However, Brundtland's definition still consists the backbone of the term's definition, because it included the differences between economic growth and environmental development. It should be noted that despite of the globality of sustainable development, its application would be different depending on the country and sector. Resulting thus to the introduction of a diversity of approaches adopted by different stakeholders in relations to sustainable development. However, Brundtland's definition for sustainability is difficult to be adopted at the organisational level. Therefore, this paper would adopt John Elkington's definition of sustainability, the Triple Bottom Line (TBL).

3. Triple bottom line

The literature regarding sustainable development and sustainability within organisations had seen an important increase in the last decade, especially in business firms (Renukappa *et al*, 2014). From an organisational perspective, sustainable development is a holistic approach that covers social, economic and environmental issues that would be beneficial for current and future generations of the concerned stakeholders (Renukappa *et al*, 2012). However, Brundtland's definition for sustainability is difficult to be adapted at this level; Therefore, several scholars argue that the concept of the tipple bottom line, developed by Elkington (1998), is the best fit to follow for organisation to implement sustainability practices within their activities. Elkington (1998) developed the triple bottom line to be a more practical definition of sustainable development, a concept that considers simultaneously and equally the economic (profit), social (people) and environmental (planet) performances of organisations. The author relates corporate progression not only with economic growth, but with environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Therefore, managing these three aspects simultaneously represents one of the biggest challenges for organisations (Epstein *et al*, 2010).

4. Institutional Theory

Theories studying external drivers mainly focus on analysing the relationships between the organisation and its environment (Frynas and Yamahaki, 2016). Several theories were established to study this relationship, such as the stakeholder theory, institutional theory, legitimacy theory and resource-dependence theory. This paper draws on the institutional theory to evaluate and examine the drivers to sustainability initiatives implementation within the Qatar oil and gas industry. Since it allows a holistic study to sustainability implementation in a complex environment such as the oil and gas sector.

Organisations' need for social legitimacy is essential for their survival, just like their ability to access capital, funds and labour. Making from it an important component that influences the success of organisations (Luhman and Cunliffe, 2013). The issue of legitimacy is the main concern of institutional theory, as it looks into how organisations try and adapt to the business environment and how their credibility can be managed. Institutional theory was introduced to formulate how institutions (company, school or governmental agency etc) shift from being an instrumental entity to one that is formed by the values of society and actions of its members (Scott, 1987). The theory's incorporation of social and cultural factors differentiates it from other environmentally oriented theories, giving an opportunity to study organisations on a larger and more specific scale (Luhman and Cunliffe, 2013). Despite the considerable literature available on institutional theory, some scholars disagree with its core concept. For instance, Kraatz and Zajac (1996) explored the impact of institutions on organisations and found very little support to how organisations seek legitimacy due to institutional pressure. Moreover, Philips and Zuckerman (2001) argue that not all

organisations within a specific market seek legitimacy; therefore, not complying to institutions' pressure. Only organisations situated in middle feel the need to be legitimate, while high-status organisations have a strong reputational and organisational capital that allow them to divert from institutional pressure and low-status organisations' main objective is to survive, by doing acting legitimately or not. The majority of the early publications' main focus was the relationship between the environment and business and accounting's role in that, with an importance given to different ways data could be processed.

Institutions must adapt and conform to their institutional environments, creating thus an isomorphism in their strategies, structures, processes and technologies. Since they would be rewarded in doing so (e.g. gain market share or benefit from subsidies from the government) or suffer in not doing so (e.g. customers boycotting their products). Institutional theory had been adopted broadly to explain sustainable development management within organizations (Huang *et al*, 2017; Glover *et al*, 2014; Escobar and Vredenburg, 2011). The theory could be used to demonstrate how any changes in society, technology and regulations can impact decision-makers commitments towards sustainable development and environmental management (Ball and Craig, 2010; Rivera, 2004). For example, Escobar and Vredenburg (2011) used institutional theory to examine the institutional pressure multinational oil companies face regarding the adoption of sustainable development, and how these companies respond to these pressures. The authors concluded that oil and gas multinational companies are subject to four sustainable development pressures, climate change, biodiversity, renewable energy and social investment.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) looked into how organisations could become identical due to external pressures. Through a thorough review of the literature three isomorphic pressures were identified. They are coercive pressure from regulations, normative pressure by cultural expectations and mimetic pressure from a desire to imitate more successful competitors.

a. Coercive pressure

Institutional theory describes coercive pressure as the pressure that is exerted from institutions within the organisation's institutional environment that are able to directly create rules that the organisation needs to comply with (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Furthermore, these institutions must be powerful enough to award conformity and punish non-compliance. Example of institutions that apply this type of pressure are governmental agencies, suppliers of limited resources (Wong *et al*, 2009). Moreover, the government's use of legislation has been effective as one of the quickest and certain methods of implementing change by ensuring an organisation remains competitive it must remain up-to-date with existing and emerging legislation (Waddell, 2008). These institutions use their influence and power to pressure organisations within their institutional environment to follow a particular set of activities, imposing thus constraints on them. Porter and Van der Linde (1995) explained how governments force organisations to comply with specific sustainability pressures through its regulatory bodies, thus gaining legitimacy and ensuring its survivor. Krell *et al* (2016) argue that if an organisation depends heavily on institutions in its business environment, the stronger the coercive pressure would be, giving thus the organisation fewer possibilities to avoid sanctions. Furthermore, it was noted that this organisation would be more inclined to amend or even change its systems and processes to cope with coercive pressure to undertake sustainable development initiatives that include environmental and social friendly activities (Jabbour *et al*, 2015). However, Shah and Rivera (2007) argue that coercive institutional pressure, especially in developing countries, have a limited impact on organisations when it comes into forcing environmental regulations; seeing their lack of political, administrative, technological and financial resources.

Porter and Van der Line (1995) state that only strict environmental regulations help encourage organisations implement environmental management practices, increasing in the process their efficiency and giving them an incentive to innovate, improve productivity and eventually sustainable competitiveness, this was later known as the Porter hypothesis. However, organisations' consideration of other pressures is instrumental for their success (Neu *et al*, 1998), Buyesse and Verbeke (2003) suggest that only organisations with reactive and end-of-pipe strategies adapt sustainable development strategies to comply with governmental regulations, as they regard such strategies only to be a pressure rather than an option to improve their practices. These organisations give a great importance to coercive pressure, but with a static and mechanistic sense. However, these strategies might, at one point, become extremely costly when organisations are trying to comply with constant evolving, complex and severe governmental regulations. Similarly, Rugman and Verbeke (1998) argument that organisations would only implement sustainable development practices if there is a coercive force (e.g. regulations, administrative enforcement), in other words, organisations would not willingly and voluntarily adapt sustainability practices within their processes, as they see that these practices do not ensure an improvement of financial performance.

The impact of coercive pressure on organisations' adoption of sustainable practices had been widely studied in literature. On one hand, conventional international scholars (Amores-Salvado *et al*, 2014; Rugman and Verbeke, 1998) argue that governmental sustainability regulations would only increase financial pressure on organisations, therefore, hindering their market competitiveness. On the other hand, revisionist scholars (Cai and Li, 2018; Hall and Vredenburg, 2003; Porter and Van der Lind, 1995) explain how sustainable development regulations compel changes within organisations, forcing them to adapt their strategies to comply with this pressure, which may result in creating an innovative competitive advantage. Therefore, for organisations to create sustainable value, ensuring a multifaced benefit, on an economic, social and environmental level, need to look into coercive forces as an opportunity that induces change and not as nuisance that would harm financial development.

b. Normative pressure

Normative pressure is the force exerted by external stakeholders that have an interest in the organisation, such as customers, suppliers, NGOs and norms set up by professional bodies and industry clusters (Huang *et al*, 2017; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Unlike the coercive pressure, institutions that exert normative pressure do not have the authority and cannot award or sanction organisations on their compliance and are only used to stop the coercive forces from emerging (Arora and Cason, 1995). Therefore, organisations comply with normative pressure not through regulatory enforcement, but rather because of its beneficial outcome (Palmer *et al*, 1993). An example of this institutional pressure is the International Standard Organization (ISO), the institution has no power to enforce sanctions on organisations that do not comply with its norms; however, companies follow the ISO norms to become ISO certified because this would help the organisation increase its customer base and appear more competitive in the market (Tsiotras and Gotzamani, 2003). Elkington (1998) suggests that the development of environmentalism and societal expectations increased the pressures exerted on organisations to adapt sustainable development practices, and any other decision would lead to their extinction. Escobar and Vredenburg (2011) argue that a normative pressure from a combination of local and international institutions would only create uncertainty and complexity, as it will broaden the set of stakeholders and norms that organisations need to comply with, especially for issues that are driven more by global worries than a local one (e.g. climate change, biodiversity and renewable energy).

Regarding sustainable development pressures, organisations are faced with multiple normative institutions that impact their strategic management. Institutions related to society, environment and economy. For industries that have a close contact with their consumers' base, improving their sustainable development performance have become vital for their success (Buyesse and Verbeke, 2003). This is because consumers are becoming more informed and more aware of organisations' environmental and social impact, driving some consumers to pay premium prices for environment and social friendly products. Zhu and Sarkis (2007) found that customer requirements compose the core normative pressure for Chinese manufacturers to implement green supply chain management, leading to having a better environmental performance. Furthermore, Ye *et al* (2013) explain how customers' normative pressure can impact an organisation's adoption of sustainable development, as customers, especially from EU and USA, would tend to buy products and services that have minimum carbon foot-prints from organisations with good corporate social responsibility. Similarly, suppliers with already set up sustainability practices might stop delivering materials to non-sustainable organisations to protect their image (Henriques and Sadorsky, 1999). Kassinis and Vefeas (2006) argue that normative forces, mainly non-governmental organisations and communities, affect organisations' sustainability behaviour. The authors explained how these normative forces can impact the public opinion, by mobilising it in favour of or in opposition to an organisation, depending on the organisation's performance and its influence on their welfare. In other words, they can help enhance organisations' sustainability performance, either directly by influencing the market place, or indirectly by changing the public policy process (Berry and Rondinelli, 1998).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explain how formal education can be an agent of normative pressure, for instance employees and suppliers' training. Regarding sustainable development, Moxham and Kauppi (2014) suggested that professional bodies and industry associations collaborate with universities and educational institutions to include sustainable development ideology within their curriculums, to ensure that new graduates entering the business market are well informed, generating thus a normative pressure on the organisation.

c. Mimetic pressure

Mimetic pressure originates from organisation's behavioural uncertainty on how to tackle a specific problem, accomplish a specific task or reach a specific goal (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This uncertainty leads organisations to imitate behaviours performed by more successful organisations in their business environments. This imitation is referred to as mimicry in the institutional theory. The rational behind this behaviour is simple, follow a more successful competitor and you will be successful. Therefore, decision makers within the organisation would choose to follow a behaviour of similar and more successful institutions, which is easy to so in todays globalised and uncertain world (Christmann and Taylor, 2001), resulting in organisations mimicking similar ones in the industry, by either using the same resources, same processes or buying the same products. This competitive pressure helps organisations to learn and adapt proven sustainability and environmentally friendly operations and strategies from their competitors, giving thus the opportunity for organisations to review their current sustainable development strategies and improve on them (Wu *et al*, 2012). Furthermore, Escobar and Vredenburg (2011) argue that the implementation of new sustainable development practices within an organisation can create uncertainty, because even if the social and environmental outcome of these practices can be recognised, their impact on the organisation's financial performance is unknown. Therefore, imitating competitive and proven strategies that seem successful would reduce the complexity and

uncertainty accompanying the adoption of sustainable development the organisation might face.

A summary of the three institutional pressures is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Institutional Theory three institutional pressures

	Coercive pressure	**Normative pressure**	**Mimetic pressure**
Origin of the pressure	***Power differences:*** Institutions within the organisation's business environment that create sustainability related rules that the organisation has to comply with. These institutions are powerful enough to reward/sanction the organisation's actions.	***Logic appropriateness:*** External stakeholders ask the organisation to have a perceived behaviour that contribute to the organisation's sustainable development. Environmental and social norms set up by industry related professional bodies. These institutions do not have the authority to reward/sanction the organisation's activities.	***Uncertainty:*** Organisations can imitate/mimic the practices and strategies of a more successful organisation within its environment to reduce the uncertainty and complexity related to implementing sustainable development.
Organisation's actions	-Evaluation of sustainability related sanctions and rewards -Evaluation of the organisation's competences in relation to SD -Planning the organisation's SD strategies to comply with regulations -Start actions required to achieve compliance	-Evaluation of positive and negative consequences of complying with norms -Evaluation of the organisation's competences in relation to SD -Planning the organisation's SD strategies to comply with norms -Start actions required to achieve compliance	-Evaluation of sustainability behaviours of other organisations in the environment -Review of successful behaviours amongst the organisations -Imitation of the behaviour that seems most suitable for the organisation
Examples	Legal regulations set by governmental agencies.	Organisations complying with International Standard Organisation ISO norms.	Organisations implementing sustainable development practices of their competitors, like environmental audits, sustainable management and eco-design.

5. Research methodology

This paper is drawn from ongoing doctoral study entitled "embedding sustainability strategies within the Qatar energy sector". Seeing that there are no previous studies conducted for evaluating the drivers for implementing sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry, a qualitative research approach was carried out (Creswell and Poth, 2017).

A well-constructed and identified research question guarantees a focus on the research scope avoiding unrelated searching and ensuring the use of only useful information (Akobeng, 2005). The PICO model has been used by Stone (2002). The model is an acronym for Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome that are important to construct research questions. Based on Tranfield et al (2003), a research question was identified using PICO model (see Table 3).

Table 3: Description of the PICO model

Acronym	Definition	Description
P	Population	Qatar Oil and Gas Industry
I	Intervention	Sustainability oriented Organisations
C	Comparison	Different external drivers
O	Outcome	External drivers for sustainability practices implementations

Therefore, this paper's research question: *What are the main external drivers that have intensified the need for implementing sustainability practices within the Qatar oil and gas organisations?*

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection tool to answer the research question. A set of twenty-four semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals from eight different organisations in the Qatar oil and gas sector. The questions for this paper addressed mainly: The external drivers that pushed the Qatar oil and gas industry to implement sustainability strategies. The research followed a purposive sampling method, this type of sampling techniques is widely used for exploratory research (Palinkas *et al*, 2015). However, due to the nature of the sensitivity of the oil and gas industry in Qatar and the middle eastern culture, a further sampling technic needed to be implemented, thus the addition of snowball sampling.

The questions of the interviews were designed to examine the interviewees perception regarding the external drivers that pushed their organisations to adapt sustainability strategies. The interviews started by asking the interviewees about their knowledge of sustainable development and sustainability strategies within their industry, in order to draw an understanding on their overall knowledge on the subject (*Given your role in this organisations, can you please explain what does sustainability mean to your organisation?*). Afterwards, the interviewees were asked about the external drivers in an attempt to understand the different pressures exerted on their organisations to implement sustainability strategies (*What do you think are the main external drivers that have intensified the need for your organisation to implement sustainability initiatives?).* The interviews were performed over a period of five months, between January 2019 and May 2019. The interviews lasted between twenty and thirty minutes, with no ethical issues related. The interviewees were, directors, project directors, quality directors, environmentalist engineers, process engineers and maintenance engineers amongst other with a minimum of three years' experience within the oil and gas industry. Table 4 represents the interviewees that participated in the study, interviewee code, company code, profession of each interviewee in the organisation and their years of experience.

Table 4: Profile of interviewees

Sl. No	**Company**	**Participants**	**Profession**	**Experience**
1.	Company A	SUSC1	Director	>13
2.	Company A	SUSC2	Process engineer	>6
3.	Company A	SUSC3	Senior health and safety officer	>5
4.	Company A	SUSC4	Process engineer	>3
5.	Company B	SUSC5	Director of sustainable development	>14
6.	Company B	SUSC6	Environmental engineer	>5
7.	Company B	SUSC7	Environmental engineer	>3
8.	Company C	SUSC8	Director	>10
9.	Company C	SUSC9	Project director	>8
10.	Company C	SUSC10	Project director	>7

11.	Company C	SUSC11	Environmental engineer	>5
12.	Company C	SUSC12	Process engineer	>3
13.	Company C	SUSC13	Mechanical engineer	>3
14.	Company D	SUSC14	Quality director	>15
15.	Company D	SUSC15	Senior process engineer	>8
16.	Company D	SUSC16	Process engineer	>6
17.	Company E	SUSC17	Mechanical engineer	>5
18.	Company F	SUSC18	Maintenance engineer	>4
19.	Company F	SUSC19	Facility engineer	>4
20.	Company G	SUSC20	Senior project engineer	>7
21.	Company G	SUSC21	Reservoir engineer	>5
22.	Company G	SUSC22	Electric engineer	>4
23.	Company H	SUSC23	Maintenance engineer	>7
24.	Company H	SUSC24	Exploration supervisor	>4

Content analysis was selected to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the collected data. The analysis would follow Elo *et al* (2014) guide for qualitative analysis. The steps followed are transcription of the audio interviews, preparation of transcripts, multiple reviews of transcripts, coding of transcripts and generation of themes. The interviews were coded to ensure anonymity of the participants, with each interview being coded as: Sustainability in Company # → SUSC#. The themes were carefully generated from the interviews and followed by coding with the help of Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software. Because of the nature of the interviews, where participants tend to discuss several subjects at the same time with relatively incomplete sentences, the content analysis was set by phrase in the software.

6. Findings

The generation of the external drivers for implementing sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas sector was based on the qualitative content analysis approach from an institutional theory lens. Seven themes were generated and grouped into the institutional theory's three pressures; coercive pressure: government laws and regulations, normative pressure: NGOs' pressure, community's pressure, international environmental standards, suppliers' pressure, customers' pressure and mimetic pressure: competitive pressure. Table # shows the interviewees response rate on the external drivers. The table presents an idea about the relevance of the identified drivers and their importance within the Qatar oil and gas sector. Each of the external drivers is explained separately by their order of relevance.

Table 5: The key external drivers for implementing sustainability strategies in the Qatar oil and gas industry

Drivers	**% of interviewees cited (N=24)**
Competitive pressure	100%
Government regulations and laws	88%
Customers' pressure	83%
Community pressure	75%
International environmental standards	38%
Suppliers' pressure	17%
NGOs' pressure	13%

a. Competitive pressure

The increase of international competition within the oil and gas industry had driven Qatar organisations to improve their sustainability performances by adapting considerable changes within their approach towards the environment and society. Mainly since nowadays organisations' environmental and social performance constitute a core part of their competitiveness in relation to quality and stability (Lui et al, 2018). That is why Bergh (2002) and Escobar and Vredenburg (2011) argue that organisations are more influenced to implement sustainable development practices by emulating and learning from more successful experience or business model of competitors than by their proper experiences, normative or coercive pressures. In this study, the competitive pressure is used to measure the mimetic pressure for Qatar oil and gas organisations sustainability strategies.

Overwhelmingly, 100% (24 of the 24) of the interviewees considers the pressure exerted by competitors as one of the main drivers for Qatar oil and gas organisations to implement sustainability strategies. For instance, interviewee SUSC17 highlighted that Qatar organisations' competitors, mainly on the international market, influence their decision to adapt sustainability initiatives:

> "The changes in the industry, how international organisations start caring about sustainability and started implementing environmentally and socially friendly systems, can be considered one of the most important drivers to implement sustainability, because it pushes us to do the same thing and innovate to do better to stay in the market"

The interviewee's statement suggests that the highly competitiveness of the international oil and gas market drives Qatar organisations to make certain changes within their sustainability strategies to improve their performance to remain relevant and competitive. In agreement with the interviewee, Sancha et al (2015) argue that in high competitive markets, mimetic pressure pushes less-committed competitors to invest extensively in their sustainability strategies in order to achieve the outcomes that the market sustainability leaders proved to be economically and technologically possible.

b. Government regulations and laws

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) defined coercive drivers as institutions with powerful forces that exert their pressure upon organisations within their environment. In this study, government regulations and laws are found to be one of the most powerful drivers that act to legitimize sustainability practices within the Qatar oil and gas organisations. Of the interviewees, 88% (21 of the 24) stated that governmental laws and regulations are amongst the key drivers for implementing sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry. For instance, interviewee SUSC7 highlighted government's pressure on organisations:

> "For Company A, I can say the first driver would be the government's wish to implement sustainability, mainly Qatar Vision 2030; since Company's majority of shares are owned by the government, implementing its programs is a priority. Mainly because the government had to sustain its most important resources for the longest period possible in order to ensure the highest level of growth in its economy and ensure that its population live in prosperity."

Analysis of the above statement clearly reveals that the Qatar government is an important driver for implementing sustainability within the sector. Regulations and laws, such as the

QNV2030, plays an integral role is setting sustainability within the sector, since it provides the environmental and societal standards that organisations comply with. In line with this, Porter and Van der Linde (1995), Faruk (2002), Walker et al (2008), Gopalakrishnan et al (2012), Raut et al (2017) and others emphasised the importance of governmental laws and regulations in the implementation of sustainability within organisations. They are considered as one of the most influential enablers of sustainability, Gopalakrishnan et al (2012) even went on to label it as "Mother of all enablers", seeing that they leave very limited options for organisations, either to comply with the regulations or leave the market.

In spite of Qatar's government powerful position, it is still failing to fully exert its pressure over the whole sector, and only dedicated organisations are fully complying with its pressure. This is apparent in some organisations' uncooperative attitude towards some sustainability initiatives, such as SDIR and Qatarisation programmes. Of the interviewees, few of them highlighted some organisations' lack of commitment towards governmental sustainability regulations due to several reasons, the misalignment of their vision and the government's orientation being one of them. Therefore, the Qatar government would not be able to totally exert its pressure unless the concept of sustainability is fully accepted within the sector. Aligned with this, Campbell (2007) argues that the presence of regulations by themselves matters but is not enough; the ability of the government to properly monitor organisational sustainability behaviour and enforce these regulations if needs to be is far more important to push organisations to implement sustainability strategies. The author adds that organisations might went on to resist governmental regulations and fight its implementation if they regard the regulations to be unfair and difficult to achieve, or if the organisations were not given a proper voice in process of making these regulations.

c. Customers' pressure

Foerstl et al (2015) argue that organisations have to incorporate consumers into their sustainability efforts, especially since the impact of their pressure can be directly felt as they are at the end of the downstream section of the supply chain. Furthermore, Al Ali *et al* (2019) noted that the motivation behind corporate sustainability is fuelled by gaining additional consumers. In this study, 83% (20 of the 24) of the interviewees identified consumers' pressure as one of the main drivers for the implementation of sustainable development strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry. The interviewees highlighted the importance of the pressure exerted by international consumers mainly from the European and North-east Asian spots, since they constitute an important market share of the sectors' exports. For instance, interviewee SUSC8 noted that:

> "Working towards meeting the specs that our customers require is necessary for us, the specs for sulphur, mercaptan and associated chemicals content in the gas we sent is specified by them; and meeting those delivery and projects force us to implement environmental processes"

From the interviewee statement, it is revealed that environmentally sensitive international customers represent one of the core normative forces that pressure Qatar oil and gas organisations to implement sustainability strategies. Zhu and Sarkis (2009) argue that globalisation has empowered international customers' pressure on organisations that can in some cases surpass the local requirement, which evident within the Qatar oil and gas industry. For instance, the lunch of the Laffan Refinery II in 2017, which follows the European emission standards. The refinery is one of the largest producers of the low sulphur Euro-V Specifications products, like Naphtha, Jet-A1 and Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel (ULSD) to be exported for the international market. While, Qatar uses Diesel with <500 sulphur

content. That is an example of the market pressure international customers exert on the Qatar oil and gas organisations. This pressure does not affect organisations in a coercive manner, but it is amongst the requirements to conduct activities within that country. Furthermore, customers are willing to purchase from one organisation over another one just because it is environmentally and socially friendly. As interviewee SUSC16 highlights:

> "In this sector you have to be sustainable; in terms of environment and social. Because everything is published; So customers can easily know a good company from the bad; they can know companies that really care about the environment and the one that does not, and they are willing to buy cleaner products even if it is more expensive"

Therefore, organisations that are able to improve their sustainability performances would certainly attract additional green customers and leading to a growth of their market share and ultimately the financial benefit. This is very understandable, especially since Qatar's international customers are very selective with minimum tolerance to defects and are motivated by a public-serving attitude. Furthermore, the absence of such normative pressure from international customers might drive organisations to slowly implement innovative sustainability solutions that the oil and gas industry is in a dire need of.

d. Community's pressure

Social consideration is reported by Kassinis and Vafeas (2006), Kuznetsov et al (2009), Fifka and Pobizhan (2014) and others to be one of the main forces driving organisations to implement sustainable development practices. Seeing that the community has the ability to directly pressure organisations to take up sustainability practices by influencing the public opinion either for or against the organisation performance, which can heavily impact its reputation. In this study, of the interviewees 75% (18 of the 24) noted that local communities drive Qatar oil and gas organisations to implement sustainability strategies. The interviewees highlighted the importance of organisations to gain communities trust in order to efficiently operate within an area. For instance, interviewee SUSC15 gave the example of Alkhour's community when the Company C decided to start operations within that area:

> "One more thing, when the Company C started the LNG trains projects, if you are familiar with Qatar's map, Alkhour is nearby Field A where Company C is located, families living in that area were complaining of the social and environmental impact of that field, thus there was a priority of employment for the people that lived in that area, and later on we were committed to reduce waste and emission to help the people of that area"

From the interviewee's statement, it is evident that even Qatar national oil companies considers the acceptance and approval of local communities very important for their operations. This stems from organisations' sensitivity to community pressure that drives them to implement sustainability strategies that could be beyond compliance initiatives. Even though this pressure is not exerted directly through regulatory enforcement, but it has the ability to pressure o organisations indirectly, through governmental policy processes and local market. Therefore, organisations within the Qatar oil and gas industry must include communities demands in its operations in order to gain "the social license to operate" (SLO) to avoid any costly and unnecessary social risks. Moreover, Kagan and Thornton (2003) highlight that the confrontationist attitude of local communities can serve as an important normative force to pressure organisation to implement sustainability strategies, as they can drive organisations to go to considerable lengths to establish trust with the community.

e. International environmental standards

Curkovic and Sroufe (2011) argued that the sharp increase of sustainability importance for organisations' competitiveness made from the measurement and continuous improvement of sustainability activities a necessity. That is why governmental approach towards sustainable development had changed from "end of pipe" regulations to "pollution prevention" ones giving thus more importance to sustainable management system standards that their influence has increased considerably and caught a lot of attention (Baek, 2018). Sustainability standards are designed mainly to help organisations achieve a full integration of social and environmental management systems to enable them to adapt a more proactive attitude towards the management of their sustainability issues (Darnall et al, 2008). From an institutional approach, organisations adapt international standards to improve their social legitimacy or if they are forced to do so by either the government or customers (Baden *et al*, 2009). In this study, 38% (9 of the 24) of the interviewees considered international standards to be a driver for implementing sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry. For instance, interviewee SUSC8 highlighted that the driving power of international standards on the industry stems from associated benefits it brings to the organisation:

> "We work with international organisations, like ISO, so when we get the ISO certificate for quality, environment or health and safety, this give our customers an idea about our performances in those areas or others, mainly because such information are available for them. In matter of fact we are among the few companies in the sector that acquired the ISO45001 for occupational health and safety, we also have the ISO9000 and ISO14001"

Analysis of the interviewees' statement indicates that international standards, such as the ISO, plays an important role in actively promoting organisations' effective management of sustainability to gain customers' trust and appreciation. Mainly since to the customers' knowledge, such standards would help organisations develop, implement, review and maintain their sustainability strategies as they drive their structure and activity planning.

f. Suppliers' pressure

Buzzeli (1991) considers suppliers as one of the most influential external stakeholders, as they play an imperative role in the success or failure of any sustainable development initiative. Since suppliers can choose to stop their delivery of inputs for an organisation or pressure it to implement alternatives strategies if it does not adapt some specific sustainability practices. Lo and Shiah (2016) indicate that organisations sustainability performance depends considerably on its suppliers, because they form a part of its supply chain. Therefore, it is essential for organisations to properly manage sustainability practices throughout the whole value chain, including suppliers' processes, products and its willingness to improve its sustainability performance. In this study, of the interviewees, just 17 % (4 of the 24) stated that suppliers are amongst the drivers that pushes organisations within the Qatar oil and gas industry to implement sustainability strategies. Meaning that suppliers have low driving power and limited influence on organisations to implement sustainability. The low interaction of suppliers on the sector is due mainly to three reasons.

The Qatar oil and gas suppliers' placement in the upstream sector make their position from the end consumer distant. This might push them to barely satisfy the minimum sustainability requirement, since they are not subjected to the severe pressure exerted from powerful stakeholders such as end consumers (international markets) and government. Siegel (2009) explains that upstream suppliers' perception of sustainability differs greatly from the rest of the operators within the supply chain. Additionally, the majority of suppliers working with

Qatar oil and gas organisations are smaller in terms of revenues, size, financial and human resources when compared to the organisation they are working with. This might push them to conceal their sustainability deficiencies or unsustainable mindset within their customers identity (Chiu and Sharfman, 2011). Furthermore, the relationship between the Qatar oil and gas organisations and their suppliers are built on a transactional relationship with reliance on competitive tendering. This kind of relationship is often adversarial, more impersonal and built mainly on an economic interest (Whipple *et al*, 2010). Resulting thus in relatively short-term relationships between the two parties, which pushes suppliers to seek instant and immediate economical return and discard the push and drive for sustainability.

g. NGOs' pressure

The nature of the oil and gas sector exposes its organisations to pressure from external stakeholders that seek to interfere with the industry development, most notably societal groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with the goal of minimising social and environmental risks caused by their activities (Deegan and Islam, 2014). With globalisation's increase involvement in the industry, the power and role of NGOs had risen drastically, since organisations are currently operating in the open and external stakeholders can know their activities immediately (Pence, 2011). Furthermore, Noga and Wolbring (2014) emphasised the importance of involvement of NGOs within the industry to push organisations to implement sustainability strategies because of the improved transparency of the market. However, in this study, only 13% (3 of the 24) highlighted that NGOs has an influence on the Qatar oil and gas organisations implementing sustainability strategies. Two of the interviewees were able to name at least one NGOs that is engaging within the Qatar's energy sector (AHBA for Energy and Sustainability Development and Qatar Sustainability Network).

NGOs' lack of involvement within the industry could be attributed to several reasons related to culture, regulations, opportunities and costs amongst other. Arenas *et al* (2009) argue that NGOs role in driving organisations to implement sustainability strategies depends strongly on stakeholders' perception of them. In other words, if NGOs are considered as a key pressuring power and a vital player in sustainability issues compared to other stakeholders. In the case of Qatar, NGOs have a low stakeholder salience, as they are missing attributes such as power, legitimacy and urgency rendering their pressuring power over organisations obsolete.

As shown in Figure 1, the external drivers identified from the interviews are grouped the institutional theory's three main pressures. All the institutional pressures have the ability to impact organisations' capability to adapt sustainability strategies. However, it should be noted that competitive pressure, government regulations and laws and customers' pressure are the key drivers for implementing sustainability within the Qatar oil and gas industry. Furthermore, there is a direct and positive relationship between environmental, social and economic value created and organisations' sustainability strategies. Organisations' sustainability performances would then serve as a feedback to the organisations, in order to improve their strategies.

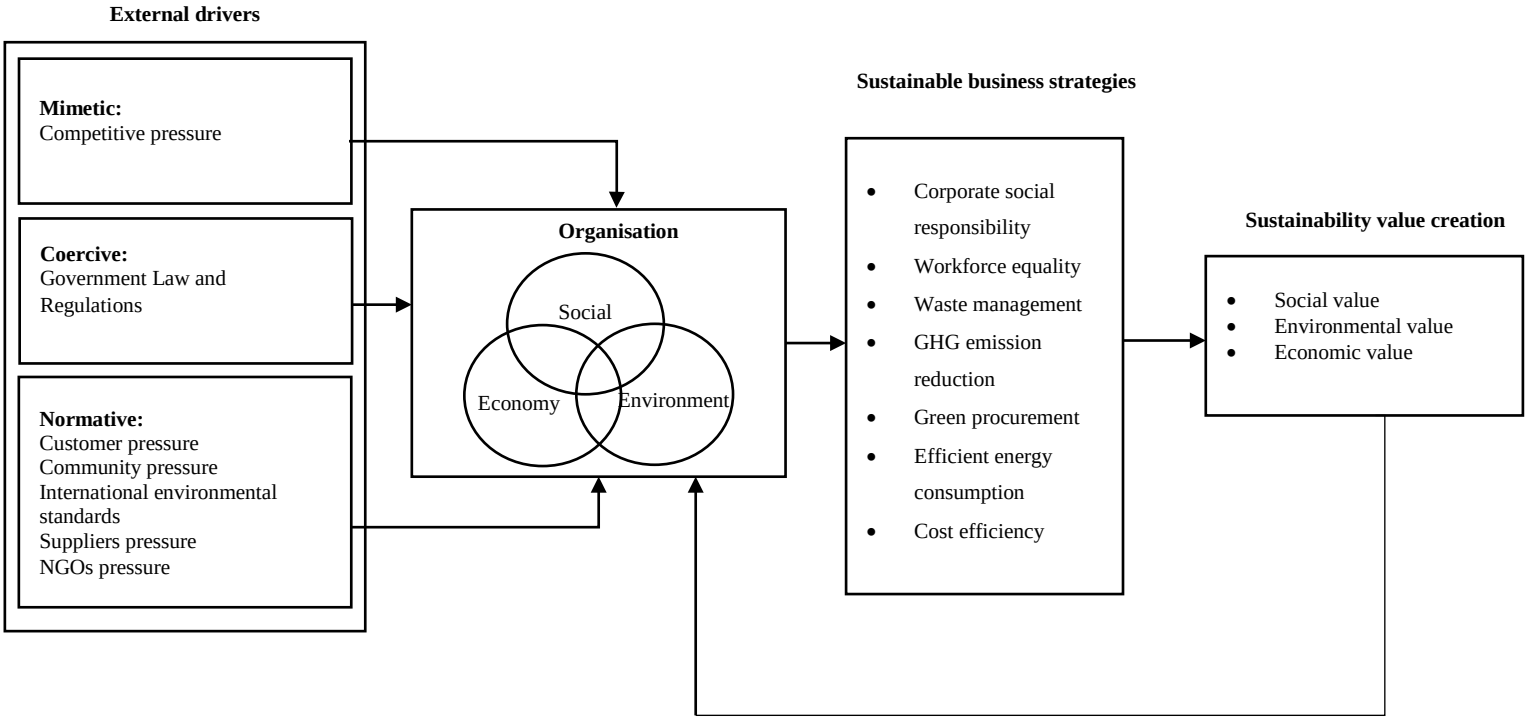

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual Framework for sustainability external drivers within Qatar oil and gas organisations

7. Conclusion

Sustainable development is a term that embodies the integration of different environmental, social and economic aspects into one specific model that promotes equity in benefiting from the planet's resources. The term introduced a new model that do not overlook the social and environmental development over the economic, it gives great importance to the economic development while considering ecological protection with a flexibility to be shaped to meet the social needs of any culture. The term had gained a lot of attention since its introduction in the late 1980s by Brundtland, and since then it became one of the vital characteristics for a successful organisation within the 21st century. It gives the organisation the opportunity to address its key issues regarding the environment, society and economy, which would impact the organisation's performances within the market place. For instance, issues such as climate change, corporate social responsibilities, energy efficiency would require specific capabilities from organisations to adapt and develop the necessary strategies and processes. For improved sustainability performances, decision makers and executives must have a better grasp and understanding of the drivers behind the organisation's decision to implement sustainability practices in order to take the right actions that would benefit them. This paper had explored the key external drivers that drives Qatar oil and gas organisations to implement sustainability practices from the perspective of institutional theory. This study is representative to Qatar oil and gas industry, giving thus this research a largely exploratory nature, with its results focusing mainly on Qatar and with limited value for the purpose of generalizability. Therefore, having a low external validity, seeing that the study is an evaluation with limited transferability.

Institutional theory posits that three main isomorphic pressures push organisations to implement sustainability practices, coercive, normative and mimetic. Utilising this concept

and the study findings, key external drivers were identified for the implementation of sustainability initiatives within the Qatar oil and gas sector. This could be a starting point for organisations in the sector to better understand the external forces that influence their decisions for an effective implementation of sustainability strategies. In this study, seven main pressures were identified: coercive pressure (governmental laws and regulations), normative pressure (NGOs pressure, customers' pressure, international environmental standards, suppliers' pressure, community's pressure) and mimetic pressure (competitive pressure). It should be noted that there are three key drivers with high salience power to pressure organisations in the Qatar oil and gas industry to implement sustainability. The most effective driver is competitive pressure, mainly because of the fierce competition the organisations within the sector is currently facing for the international market. The QNV 2030 made from governmental laws and regulations a key driver as well. Furthermore, the industry's international customers are amongst the major drivers for sustainability implementation in the sector mainly because of their environmental concerns. Therefore, organisations' attempt to conform and reduce the uncertainty depends heavily on the type of force exerted on them, whether it was from the government (coercive), external stakeholders (normative) or competitors (mimetic). In other words, the organisation's choice of sustainability practices, their level of implementation and even the extent of compliance would depend on the strength and clarity of governmental regulations, the level of influence of external stakeholders and the competitors' sustainability performance.

- **Theoretical implications**

The paper offers a new and fresh insight of sustainability concept from the perspective of the Qatar oil and gas industry that has never been done before. Furthermore, the paper explored the reasons that shaped Qatar oil and gas organisations to implement sustainability initiatives, which has been extensively ignored in the literature.

- **Managerial implications**

The paper has practical implications for organisations within the oil and gas the industry looking to implement sustainability strategies. The paper offers top management a clear understanding of the pressures that drive organisations to adapt sustainability initiatives. Therefore, managers within the industry need to work alongside all of its external stakeholders to ensure an efficient implementation of sustainability, and in particularly, international customers and government. Additionally, they need to strengthen their relationship with the third sector and suppliers, which would introduce a new perspective that is absent on the industry.

- **Policy implications**

The lack/weak enforcement of sustainability related regulations and rules would only undermine the power exerted by the coercive pressure. Furthermore, governmental regulations should be more inclusive of societal regulations, even if they are more complex and more difficult to implement, as society has an equal weight with the sustainability aspect. Moreover, policy makers have to undertake a proactive approach in the introduction and implementation of sustainability related regulations.

One of limitation of this research is its lack of generalizability, as countries with different environment might be exposed to different and new external drivers. Furthermore, additional research is required to explore the internal key drivers the implementation of sustainability strategies within the Qatar oil and gas industry from a theoretical perspective. A combination of the studies (external and internal) would provide a complete understanding of what drives

organisations within the sector to implement sustainability strategies. Moreover, an analysis that looks into the relationship between the different drivers and how they impact each other would give a more accurate understanding of the situation.

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